



IMMIGRANT/HISPANIC AGRICULTURAL WORKER SAFETY AND HEALTH

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

- Agriculture is recognized as being one of the most hazardous industries in the United States, ranking second only to the mining industry in yearly fatality rates.
- Eighty-five percent of hired agricultural crop workers in the United States are foreign-born, and of that population, 90% are from Latin America.
- Of the estimated three to five million migrant and seasonal farm workers who work in the United States each year, approximately 7% are adolescents.

WHAT HAS NIOSH ACCOMPLISHED?

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) conducts a national program in agricultural safety and health which includes intramural research; ten regional Centers for Agricultural Disease and Injury Research, Education, and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/niosh/agctrhom.html); six Community Partners Programs for Healthy Farming; a National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety (www.marshfieldclinic.org/research/children); and numerous grants. In partnership with seven state health departments, NIOSH conducts monitoring of acute pesticide illness and injury. Each component of the national program includes activities addressing concerns of workers in immigrant/Hispanic populations. With extramural partners in two states and utilizing *promotores de salud* (lay health care workers), NIOSH supports an intervention program that is designed to reduce eye injuries and illnesses in Latino farmworkers. In cooperation with the National Center for Farmworker Health, NIOSH supports and participates in the planning of the annual (Migrant) Farmworker Stream Forums (www.ncfh.org) which help researchers, workers, and advocates break down barriers and develop trust and cooperation.

Examples of program in action:

- With NIOSH support, researchers designed, tested, and evaluated an intervention that reduced ergonomic problems for workers in the wine-grape industry. A reduction from 57 pounds to 46 pounds in the weight of grapes loaded into the bins and carried by the workers resulted in a reduction in back, neck, shoulder, and knee pain. This was accomplished with no loss in productivity or earnings. In 2001, over 1,000 workers were using these bins with no other incentive than healthier working conditions. This intervention and others are described in *Simple Solutions: Ergonomics for Farm Workers* (www.cdc.gov/niosh/01-111pd.html), that is published in both English and Spanish.
- To better understand issues faced by immigrant agricultural workers, NIOSH is collaborating with the Department of Labor (www.cdc.gov/niosh/01-19311.html) to collect data on hired crop farm workers, most of whom are foreign born, through the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS). NAWS is the only national study that has documented the living and working conditions of immigrant workers.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Efforts to address the unique problems of immigrant/Hispanic workers will continue with the development of culturally sensitive interventions and worker training programs and materials.

For additional information on this and other NIOSH programs, visit www.cdc.gov/niosh.

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